

## **The First Judges**

The Gospel Project: Unit 8 Session 1

Judges 3

Midweek Bible Class

Week of May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026

**Christ Connection:** God brought consequences to His people for their sins, but He also raised up judges to save them from their enemies. We also have consequences for our sins, but God sent Jesus to save us from our sins once and for all.

**Big Picture Question:** What is repentance? PS: Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus. Elem: Repentance is turning away from sin and turning to Jesus.

**Memory Verse:** PS: If my people pray and turn from sin, I will forgive them. 2 Chronicles 7:14. Elem: If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14

**Repentance:** an active turning away from our sin and turning to God

**Leader Bible Study:** In Jonah 3:1-10, we witness the profound effects of repentance and God’s immense mercy. Jonah’s reluctant journey to Nineveh becomes a story of an entire city turning from their ways, setting a powerful example of true repentance. Jonah’s message from God is clear and urgent, calling the people of Nineveh to turn from their evil ways. Remarkably, from the king to the commoner, everyone responds with fasting, sackcloth, and a heartfelt change in behavior. In these verses, we witness the transformational power of repentance and God’s incredible mercy. The people of Nineveh not only acknowledged their wrongdoings but

also demonstrated their commitment to change through their actions. This narrative highlights that true repentance goes beyond mere words; it requires a sincere change in behavior and a reorientation toward God's ways.

Repentance is a critical spiritual discipline that allows us to realign our lives with God's will. It involves recognizing our sins, feeling genuine remorse, and making a deliberate decision to turn away from sin and toward God. In this process, we open ourselves to God's grace and mercy, experiencing His forgiveness and renewal.

As leaders, our understanding and practice of repentance are crucial. We set a model for those we lead, demonstrating that acknowledging our failures and seeking God's forgiveness is not a sigh of weakness, but of strength and humility. Reflect on your own life and identify areas where repentance is needed. What actions can you take to show a true change of heart?

Prepare spiritually by praying for a repentant heart and seeking God's guidance in your leadership. Ask Him to reveal areas of sin and to give you the courage to address them. As you lead your session, share personal stories of repentance and transformation, encouraging your group to see the beauty in turning back to God.

In the coming week, challenge yourself to practice repentance daily. Be attentive to the Holy Spirit's conviction and be willing to make changes that align your life with God's will. As you experience His mercy and grace, let it inspire you to lead others on this path of repentance and renewal. Remember, repentance is not just about turning away from sin but also turning toward a deeper relationship with God, experiencing His love and mercy in new and profound ways.

**Welcome**  
**Sing Songs**

## **Color Dot Chaos**

Materials: hula hoops, bean bags, construction paper

Create a large square by placing hula hoops in each corner of the room, then add six or seven beanbags to each hula hoop. Place construction paper throughout the square, ensuring there is at least one or two of each color near each corner. Create four teams, assigning each team a color of construction paper and a hula hoop. Explain that the kids will move about the room by stepping only on their team's color of construction paper and work to get beanbags from the other hula hoops to their hula hoop. If they stand on another color or step on the floor, they have to return to their hula hoop and start again. At the end of a set amount of time, the team with the most beanbags in their hula hoop wins.

## **[Learn About Repentance](#)**

### **Review Spiritual Disciplines**

Materials: none

Say, ***“During this time each week we come together to learn about and practice spiritual disciplines.”***

Ask, ***“What is a spiritual discipline?”***

Say, ***“A spiritual discipline is a practice, or repeated action, we do to help us grow in love for God and godliness. Some examples of spiritual discipline are worship, prayer, celebration, fasting, Bible study, service, rest, and generosity.”***

### **Introduce the Discipline of Repentance**

Materials: none

Say, ***“This week, we are starting to focus on a new spiritual discipline: repentance. When we repent, it means that we turn away from sin and turn back to God’s plan for our lives.”***

Ask, ***“What are some things God might want us to turn away from?”***

Say, ***“Those are great thoughts! Let’s play a game to help us understand this spiritual discipline.”***

### **Group Game: Carry It**

Materials: buckets, small objects, spoons

Divide the kids into two teams. Place a bucket filled with small objects at the starting line for each team. Place an empty bucket a few yards away. The goal is for each team to move all the objects from the starting bucket to the empty bucket using a spoon. Kids must successfully move all their items wins.

Say, ***“This game reminds us of our spiritual discipline for this unit: repentance. Repentance involves recognizing our sins, taking responsibility for them, and making a conscious effort to turn away from them. As we move the items from one place to another, we are reminded that repentance is about moving away from sin and closer to God, seeking His help to change our behavior and follow Him more closely.”***

### **Read the Bible**

Materials: Bibles

Say, ***“Today, we are diving into a story from the book of Jonah. We’ll be reading Jonah 3:1-10. In this passage, we see that God sent Jonah to the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was a place known***

***for bad behavior and poor choices, and God wanted them to change. Jonah was not eager to go, but he eventually obeyed God and went to Nineveh to deliver a very important message.”***

Read Jonah 3:1-10 aloud.

Say, ***“God told Jonah to tell the people of Nineveh that they were doing wrong and needed to change their ways or their city would be destroyed.***

***When the people of Nineveh heard Jonah’s message, they believed God. They showed they were sorry about their sin by fasting and wearing sackcloth, which were signs of mourning and repentance in those days. Even the king of Nineveh humbled himself, took off his royal robes, and sat in ashes to show his sorrow for the city’s wrong actions. He issued a decree for everyone to turn from their evil ways and violence.***

***When God saw that they had turned from their wicked ways, He had compassion for them and did not bring the destruction He had threatened. This story shows us that God values repentance and is merciful when we truly turn away from our wrong actions and choose to follow Him.”***

### **Christ Connection**

Materials: none

Say, ***“Just like the people of Nineveh, we all make mistakes and need to repent. But the amazing news is that we have Jesus, who made it possible for us to be forgiven and receive His righteousness.***

***Think back to our recent Bible study session about the Israelites in the book of Judges. Do you remember when they kept falling into a cycle of sin and repentance? (Allow responses.) In Judges 3, we learned that the Israelites would turn away from***

***Go down and do what was wrong. God would allow their enemies to defeat them as a consequence. When the Israelites cried out to God and repented, He raised up judges to save them and bring His people back to Him. This cycle repeated itself because the Israelites would often return to their old ways instead of making a true change. Just like He did for Israel, Jesus offers us forgiveness and true change when we repent and turn to Him!"***

### **Group Activity: New Life**

Materials: dry erase boards/paper, markers

Give each kid a dry erase board or large sheet of paper and a marker. Ask them to draw or write something they know is wrong, like telling a lie or being unkind. After a few minutes, explain that repentance means turning away from our sin and receiving Jesus' righteousness, or perfection. Lead the kids to erase what they wrote, if using a dry erase board, or turn the page over if using paper, and draw a cross to represent Jesus' gift of forgiveness.

Say, ***"Erasing the sinful action off our board and replacing it with the cross reminds us how God forgives people who repent and gives them Jesus' perfect righteousness. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection give Christians the power to leave wrong actions behind and follow Him."***

### **Follow Up on Last Week's Challenges**

Materials: none

Say, ***"Last week, our challenge was to take our worries and fears to God right away."***

Ask, ***"How did it go? Was it easy or difficult to remember to go to God with your struggles and worries?"***

## **Introduce This Week's Challenge**

Materials: none

Say, ***“Let’s try a new challenge this week. If you make a mistake, have the courage to tell the person you hurt and ask for their forgiveness. It might be a friend, family member, or even someone at school. When we get together next time, we’ll chat about what it was like to repent and how you felt in your heart afterward. Remember, repentance helps us build trust and strengthens our relationships with others and with God.”***

## **Love God by Practicing Repentance**

### **Repentance Cross**

Materials: wooden cross, paper, pencil, tape

Place a wooden cross at the front of the room. Give each child a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask them to think of something they did this past week that they need to repent of, such as telling a lie, being unkind, or not listening to their parents. Lead them to write or draw a picture of what they need to repent of on their piece of paper. Once they have finished, remind them that repentance means admitting our mistakes and asking God for forgiveness. Invite the kids to fold up their papers and then come forward one by one and tape their papers on the cross, have each student spend a few moments in silent prayer, asking God to forgive their sins and help them turn away from wrong actions.

### **Memory Verse Bookmark**

Materials: card stock and markers/colored pencils

Give each kid a strip of card stock and markers or colored pencils. Lead them to write the memory verse on the paper and decorate the

bookmark. Point out that God called the Israelites to repent by turning from their evil ways. He still calls us to repent today. Encourage kids to look up 2 Chronicles 7:14 in their Bibles and mark it with their bookmarks.

### **Close in Prayer**

Materials: none

Use the scripted prayer below, pray in your own words, or ask a student to pray.

***Say, “Jesus, thank You for giving us the opportunity to repent and change when we sin! Help us choose to turn away from everything that is not of You. Amen.”***